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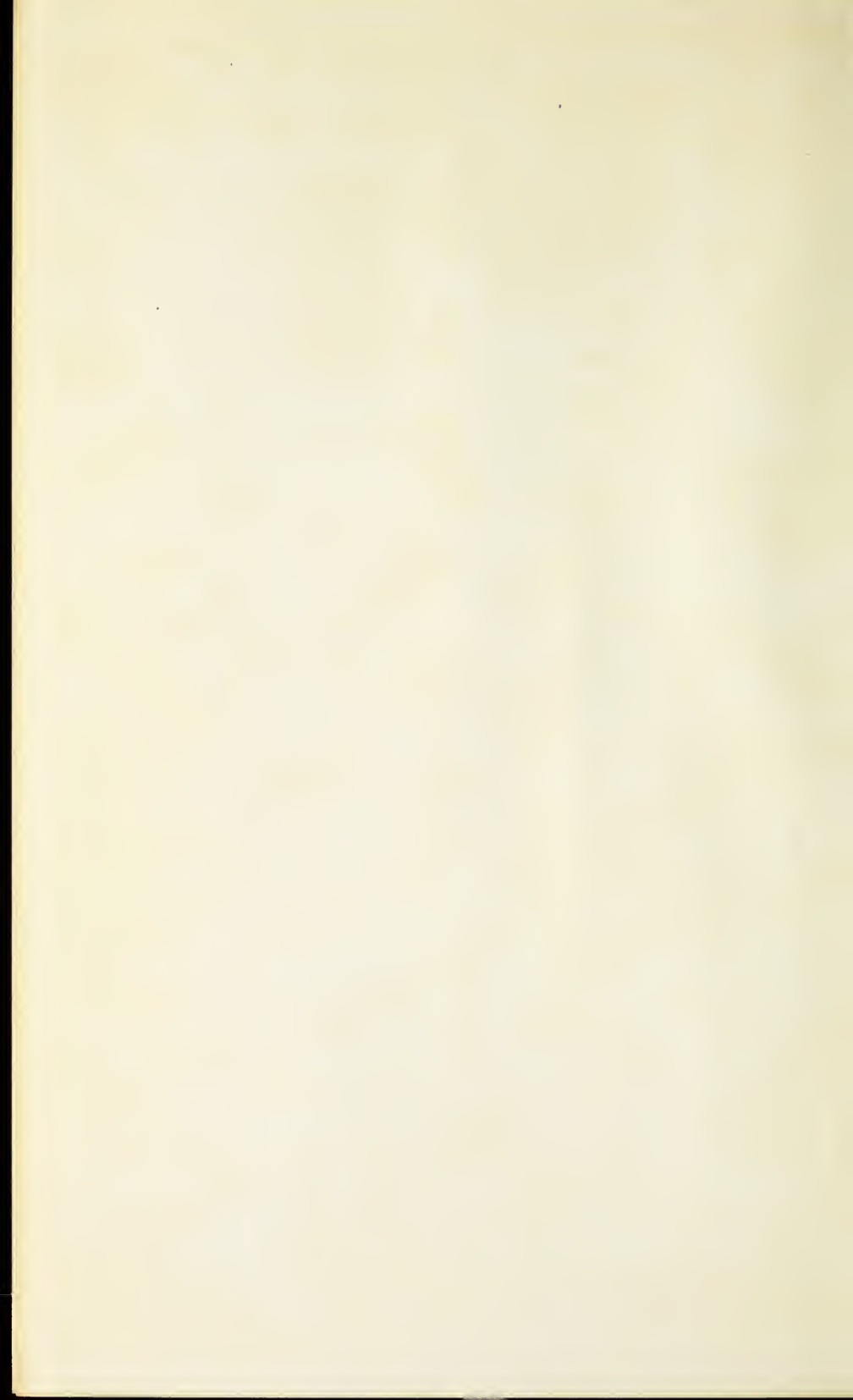
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## A CURIOUS QUIRE





# *A CURIOUS QUIRE*

POEMS BY

*STANLEY KOEHLER    LEON O. BARRON*

*DAVID R. CLARK    ROBERT G. TUCKER*

LITHOGRAPHS BY DONALD R. MATHESON

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Stanley Koehler: *A Winter Gardener*



## Systems

### I

A world, a fruit: and how to comprehend it?

If only it would divide through some  
degree of arc, down to its center, then

I could enter it neatly, with my hands  
clean and my brow cool. As it is, one comes  
back bent to it, and with spade labor  
invades that wholeness, removing what can  
be in no other way understood.

Better to trust nature, pursuing caves in her  
casual and most generous veins.

For if it *were* a poem, not vanity  
of form in an overwhelming matter,  
but the world itself, bending the brain, huger  
than reach or stride, rounding on a rich  
center whose weight is felt, from vastness drawing,

how would you enter but on its own lines,  
leading through meaning as a cave does,  
caverning in substance, in itself void:  
or breach to the ruin of such treasure  
through cunning corridors, cunningly mined.

### II

And here is a marvellous fruit. Unrinding  
to essence, it reaches finely to  
the nostrils in the faintest spray, where all  
broaches at once to the thing itself,  
the fiber uncelled to this extravagance,  
this wasting flood of substance undivided.  
Avoid the waste, if you can, pressing for  
juice in a bottle, and sterile hands,

or by purer chemistry divest that  
fruit of its past, the seed of its future.

But it is more than the fruit: not pulp, nor  
rind, but the infinite seed's conjecture,  
from the dust where it fell summoning still  
the sky of it, tree motion felt at  
the one height, through an autumn's ripening.

Such fruit is too subtle to save. It has  
nothing for systems. But where bones join  
in their blind hunger, how kindly it blesses  
their thirst, with a savour not quite free  
of the sap unsweetening and to come.



## Chambers Street Ferry

Over tunnels running straighter than  
the river, ferries slide.

Among all that circumstance of trash or pride  
their purpose expends bluntly, but  
with much success along the orange crates,  
bending their wake against the tide.

Simpler than art is the artfulness  
that steers their awkwardness in such places.  
The curved concession lasts in the gray spaces,  
over which the more casual air  
forgets between one wind and another  
the gulls' more flippant graces.

## Brooklyn Bridge

Thin river, soonest bridged,  
down whose sad shores the towers pair like girls  
in child's play, serious,  
stringing their ropes  
of steel with slackened hands,

I come where I can see it,  
humming as it soars, mettlesome and tall  
over the river,  
the way  
of its ascent,

its demure decline. Whatever presses  
landward goes upward first,  
the shadows lifting  
and blown away  
with a strong air.

But it is clear  
that the spring with breath held across boats  
and masts  
comes down at last  
in steel,

steel in cement  
hidden, and when it does  
the grace corrupts,  
shadows go sideways  
for miles.

## Hellgate

I don't know but that gulls come there  
in passing, alight  
on anchored rock, for refuge,  
movements of wing composed a moment  
over the scattered race.

It was also their choice, who knew  
the joy of channels  
swiftly moving, and could ride  
their skill in them,  
committed to the winds.

They brought their bottoms to this Kill  
and for the cheap passage,  
weathering the shore,  
saw profit either way,  
admission to the islands,

*Hellgate*, in truth: no more  
beautiful pass, and praised  
in the hour they made it, that  
harlot stream, the kill,  
the witty river.

## Spuyten Duyvil

Having had his fill  
and bored with talk  
of the riparian folk

I'll swim that strait  
for all your djinn  
he said and spat

and started in  
leaving the others by the Tree,  
swimmers, but of a strong fancy.

He tastes the salt.  
The whiff of ocean  
starts in him a queer notion

Pukwidjinnies,  
Neebanawbaigs  
catch his breathing,

harm his legs. The landmark's gone  
but still he hears  
the sea singing, with his own ears.



## To Margaret in her room

I know how the night must look to you, Margaret,  
seeing it dark and near, as clear as your  
large eyes. The stars and moon are unacquainted  
with space, but move how prettily, in patterns  
silver and round and with the clearest edges.  
There is some wind—a little—nothing to say  
distance, inertia; hardly more  
than the summoning of your clean white curtains.

How soon will those worlds fly off, though,  
to their own orbit, granting  
their size, the speed that makes all place ridiculous.  
Unless you ride nearer, oh innocent,  
than I, and nearer than I know, to all  
that quietly shines outside of your tall window.

## Twilight: Oran

Children have always  
some sidewalk song to sing,  
court wonders in nursery rimes, and dance  
toward sleep in twilight revel.  
In the hour when there is no sun

between supper and sleep,  
you hear them in the street  
moving without shadow where they sing  
frailly in the faint light; not quite  
dark; this very light.

Their ritual alters nothing,  
circles and returns, renewing  
ends in beginning, that they may be  
children still, in spite of time.  
But evening contradicts them, breaking

the rhythm: the darkness comes, and we go  
over thresholds suddenly, to rehearse  
in a consuming dream the dance from which we wake  
not as we were, so strong  
time moves in the measures of a song.

## Hey diddle diddle

Could you tell such wonders  
to your child, if curb and pavement  
were his real world,  
his trees  
all mulberry trees, not real?

Or scare him with cracked crowns  
and tumbling Jill and some frail creature  
sitting on a wall  
if he were afraid of height,  
for a sidewalk fall?

Fable, for truth's sake,  
to his need of smokestacks higher than beanstalks,  
of errant spoons and streetlights  
the cow jumps over,  
most neighborly moons:

but fear how the facts may be taken.  
To fall  
though but from the roofs  
to meadowless worlds, may hobble  
the marvellous hoofs.

## The observers

In a world so narrow a step  
spans it, street-sweepers move  
ignorantly,  
cleaning in one direction,

Hercules  
at his filthy task.

But children who have their way will walk  
orderly behind those brooms;  
in a wise trance will follow  
water drawn curb-wise on the first warm days  
of March; or lean  
by sewers, for their cavern sound.



## Boy and mackerel

Beyond the breakwater, where the bow rose  
to the true ocean,  
we fished for a while,  
and I could have wished  
it might have been close to shore.

Our luck was poor, if you did not count  
the crabs  
dropping when they felt the air.  
Dull things, we were not there  
to trouble their lifeless world,

but angling against odds to wring,  
out of chance, some small event.  
One string dipped first,  
one hand held up  
from the swirl

its swaying hook.  
Was it a loss to measure?  
The sea is transformed by a feat  
of life, our hands have  
held it, have felt its weight,

and tremble to think  
it will come back—  
as it does,  
twisting in the net, blue—  
barred and silver dumb.

In season all things  
are drawn from their depth to shallows,  
the fertile sand,  
as we in season drift  
past all our landmarks.

Drawn on by currents  
we do not see,  
we cast our bait where innocence is hung, to take  
and be taken: to breed in the heart  
like spawn.

## The blue umbrella

From tide to tide  
we lay under a blue shade.  
The water's edge crept up; we slept  
by children at their play,

and not one thought  
of ocean took us.  
No notion of the done undoing  
in the green wave

till hours older  
I stepped where I could  
on wider sand, and watched.  
Never a castle

we had bent to  
or wryly wrought shadowed  
the shining plain, yet there  
between the loose sand

and the sea, how  
far from me my children  
built again.

Sun, that will  
drive them thence,

these hours undo me.  
I think of a blue umbrella set  
at flood, pitched close  
to what was dark

and under tide,  
it may be, for a mark  
they could make out, whatever ebbs  
they knelt beside.

## A brace of beagles

Breaching in tall grass, past hay  
and haying, they  
run to the wall with the wire, and  
over, the barb goes  
singing down vacant nerves.

A secret is in their veins  
that cancels everything.  
The sky over meadows they  
enter falls until  
it touches the hill.

The color of blood  
is in this sound and season.  
I can hear from the hill  
a baying,  
but silence at the center of the wood.

## To a dogwood

Bare root  
like a knout  
or a fist expects  
wherever I place it  
drought.

Water without rain  
runs out,  
and drought  
breeds drought.  
I know,

but in faith  
or memory  
kneel  
at the ditch,  
and feel,

to a stick,  
out of earth and  
its thirst,  
the layering green and white grace  
burst.

## The plantain

These vulgar leaves, of other green than grass,  
spread low to earth, unbeautifully,  
to cover its nakedness. Where the soil  
is hardened, and after many feet  
forbids the roots of more tender things, this  
coarseness survives, and will finally  
flower, lifting over its abasement  
the tall spears of its seed.

In richer earth, where rank and delicate  
weeds spring up prospering to the sun,  
this thing trusts most the shadow of its own  
shape, flattening where the serpent runs.  
Graceful in ill, how thin a form attends  
efficient evil. But this grossness  
saves, and to the bruising heel submits  
its most healing leaves.



## Two by the forsythia

Black bird, alighting, moves  
wing shadows on the green lawn.  
For a moment, a minor statue, then  
slur, in a blur of legs.

By the drapery of a bush  
the watcher hides his motion, all  
but the tail; the brittle legs  
pause again, black neighboring black.

Stillier is a cat's breath  
than worms, or insect's clamor.  
I will take on a stick  
the flesh he lets rot

to be fragrant in some other  
spring, and on these same boughs.  
Is it hate or hunger  
that keeps this beast well-fed?

He is here for beauty;  
the effect is made  
by shadow and sharp motion where  
these yellow blossoms fall.

## The maze

He lives in a tangle, among trees  
where patterns of mice and bird  
proceed. So much life, so much need  
is a maze too much for me,

but he has the skill to keep tabs.  
Nerves of a barn cat know  
when a nest or a hole  
is warm, or turning cold. To him,

mysterious signals come in  
the earth and air, and from  
the nearest pool, though hardly  
a scale, and rarely a wing or a tail

is proof. Down secret walks he goes  
in a stalk, foot-reaching soft.  
It is this he dreams of when a warm  
bulb or the right air touches his twitching

skin. In that labyrinth he winds,  
returning round, till snow  
covers the thread too deep.  
Cold is the clever eye, the paws

keep turning wrong. I track  
failures till footfall goes off  
in a thaw, and he spins  
out of it, elsewhere, pussyfooting to spring.

## Cellar hole

It is rare to see  
such fresh beginnings on an old ground.  
We have stumbled on scenes like this  
before, where the cellar hole

was a pit of grief,  
swept bare by wind or fire, leaving no sign.  
But this is a wall of dirt that drops  
from leaves and a shelf of clay, more bare,

no stone to line it,  
but rocks, haphazard, and roots that twist  
and hang and throw up a failing incense  
to the air. First growth has another look.

These trees have known loss,  
but the acre is woods still, its secrets  
older than ours: tomorrow will be  
'a violence to its boughs.

The light

slants up the meadow;  
the cellar fills with dark. It is hard to say  
which one it is that makes the green so green,  
and our violation of the earth so fair.

## Footprints for fresh earth

I could have stopped it with a stone,  
that this mortal dog  
and his fellow come  
crossing the fresh earth where grass will be,  
that predictable sortie.

Though their trails have been  
hauled off, new earth  
thrown down on them,  
it does not change their ways  
running true to woods in a changed scene.

Shadowed they are by trees arching  
over the lost lane.  
Shall I shy at them a stone or two  
from that old moraine?  
I bend to the past

and as I do, I mind  
how warmth like my hand's  
hollowed from ice the fresh space  
where I stand.  
Having felt

that wind off of time, I suppose  
something laid down with the leaves  
remains, to serve  
in patterns of the nerve, though earth  
turns over and the leaves remove.

## A winter gardener

Into a waste of garden, and the deep  
disorder that inherits in its season,  
he comes before summer begins, to work  
on the side of order. That it may flower  
in strictness, he disposes the bare seed  
into rich beds, to make the system perfect.

Nothing is chance where theory is perfect.  
And he envisions, from that plane, the deep  
geometry through which the shallow seed  
fulfills itself, blossoms from which the season  
will withhold itself, not to harm the flower,  
so breathing as to let the theory work.

Truth is, there are distortions that must work  
also. But symmetry that can perfect  
itself in air is his problem, the flower,  
not roots that sink to their thirst's hazards, deep  
in the ground to outlive the leaf's short season.  
Such luck is a dimension in the seed.

But he would have nothing random from seed  
to send it ravaging: all reasoned work,  
not formless, a forage, into a season  
longer than summer and yet never perfect.  
For his choice is the bee's choice, in the deep  
solstice of whose eye there is just the flower.

Let there be nothing here that does not flower  
and give that heady traveler his seed:  
give also, to his busyness, the deep

wine that he needs, its sweetness to that work.  
Connoisseurs, performers, good to perfect  
generation, hovering a brief season

without passion though it is passion's season,  
that at the end you may have from the flower  
some scentless treasure to keep perfect,  
honey, and the sterility of seed,  
cold is the reason for your honey-work:  
toward which you move as if it were that deep

season whose order lapsing in the flower  
returns in seed, its form held sweetly perfect  
in the deep comb toward which all patterns work.







Leon O. Barron: *Alter Egos*



## The Foolish Cat that Died on Hallowe'en

Under the final straw of this light loss  
The summer's bridge has fallen down,  
And like this cat that played about our legs  
Lies buried in bright leaves.

Soft children who once cradled her  
And vaguely sang their infant love  
Observe the make-shift ritual  
Without a word.

One dreams of pumpkins carved and lit  
Against the horror of his Hallowe'en;  
This older boy, my arrow aimed at time,  
Is stonily withdrawn.

At ankle height, the brother of this cat  
Of fuzzy frailties and sudden strengths  
Storms straws at every wind.  
The breezy cosmos blows him steady good.

Well may they share the mansions of their house,  
For they who promise nothing are not bound  
By blood to mourn a loss.  
But above this natural scene the old leaves twist.

## The Pioneer's First Premise

Always in a half-light  
Not of sun or moonlight always  
But of something given by his glance,  
He sought for certainty beyond the edge of chance,

Belied the Rubens bellies and soft arms  
Thrown carelessly on sofas storeys high.  
He fled from grossness and pursued nuance.

Thus left the city in its darkest hour,  
The neon's red glare having blared itself  
Silent as the jukebox in the empty bar,  
The subway's last pulsations merged with sleep;

And wormed along the coiled way  
Of labyrinths and earth's browned scars,  
To all appearances majestically  
Oblivious to fat fronds, ooze beneath his feet.

But meditation has its values, scrutiny (that faery quality) pays off:  
He heard the cry of kissing in the serpent's hiss,

And knew that here alone was his discovered land,  
His private place divorced of disaffection.  
Here honesty stood naked and proclaimed  
That quiet screaming place where earth gives way.



## In Time of Sudden Change

Complacence like conglomerate untouched  
Defies those lightning streams  
That cut their self-made way  
Through goodly knots of age-high argument;

And yet, as if confronted by  
The glacier's roar, the tiger's sudden shriek,  
It moves, it moves to firmer earth,  
Affirming what is ephemeral.  
We are made mystic by enormity.

We too have found ourselves struck down, struck dumb,  
At the heat-raped screaming of the perfect sky,  
The earthquake storming, the body's first  
Or last despairing cry.  
The lightning humbles as it always has.

## An Autumn Lecture

The bell proclaims the changing of one's guard.  
The clock is punctual. Now all  
The students seconding its works  
Appear and quietly attend  
The chair that scrapes, the gravely sounded cough.

The lecturer's appearance is well timed.  
In practiced counter-tenor he pours out  
His notes, and not one liquid sound is lost.  
All is absorbed by the well-tempered air,  
Earmarked for future use.

No hand however beats in truce or opposition  
And the speaker finds such silence too profound;  
Only above the door he hears suggested sound:  
It is the clock that busily emits  
Its gentle raspberry of passing tone.

Therefore he scans the young who can afford  
Impatience with their hour. His eyes stand firm  
Against all rebels, and his breathless voice  
Now winds around the shriller stories of  
His mind. Against their petulance he builds  
An Attic fortress on the side of time.

(The virtue of one's age is avarice  
That chucks time's dearest and best-rounded face,  
Vows constancy, and only pleads to serve  
The altar of communion with the clock.)

And why indeed should anyone object?  
His repertoire is scaled beyond reproach.  
The teacher stands for everything recorded:  
The poem's beat, the play's division,  
Soul's first alarm and last revision,

The torso of each period neatly hacked,  
Respectably invested, gravely filed.  
So might the ghost of Hamlet's father scream,  
"My son, my son, dismember me!"

But they are on the window's side, that glass  
That separates the then and now.  
The sight of autumn sounds no symbols there.  
Time means no more than space and all is fair.  
"O you," he sings, a point between his first  
And second clause, "I bring you truth.  
Eternity unwinds above the door."

But leaving their pawned bodies in his hands,  
They play in time's most metered space.  
They delve in other leaves than those he reads.  
Alas, the bell will summon them to leave,  
To gather up their notes, their books, themselves,  
To pierce their teacher with their untaught smiles,  
Their thoughtless haste to merge with autumn flame.

## The Last Word

A ncient concubines, loosed upon their silk, and  
L ank-cheeked ministers, aghast in retrospect, and  
L awyers (whom Swift alone could modify), and

T yrants in the vineyards of their wives, and  
H eroes whose issued weapons soon became their own, and  
E aldormen who slithered from the tube of their gemote, and  
S impler souls who advertised their  
E asiest disguise

D id (O long before our present world) announce,  
“I do not choose to grant your suit.”  
E ach one of these in turn heard Death say, “*You?*”  
(which Love, of course, had always tried to say.)

## Outside of Eden

The man of passion  
Who, shafts of winter sunlight  
Streaming from the window's magic glass,  
Was a child sitting at an old pine desk  
When the teacher tapped the sunbeam-reaching arms  
To necessary order,

Has always found, even in darkest closets,  
The saving sound, the freeing force of words,  
That even timid and retarded words  
Which link the imperfection of a sound  
To things of real worth, can bribe  
The genuine regard,  
And open doors no other force could force,  
And summon the solace of love.

## Eulogy

The drip of drying nylon ends our day.  
Let us bepraise  
Whatever mighty powers taught us how  
To wash and dry  
Without the toil and boil of former days.

That celebrated keeper of the wash,  
Nausicaa,  
Though activated by a clever god,  
Lacked our resource,  
And carted laundry to the river's mouth.

With our advantages, of course, she could  
Have stayed at home  
To clean up odds and ends around the house.  
Why have her go  
So far from home, and her a single girl?

True, after pounding hard upon the stones  
She could take home  
The gleaming breast of washed Odysseus  
As sample for  
Her dinner-time account of well-scrubbed things.



But that efficiency was more than hers:  
Athena led  
The band of washers on that golden day,  
And washed ashore  
The salty hero slow at getting home.

Like any decent god, Athena knew  
What gods must do:  
She let her hero glimpse a cleaner life,  
Then, saving time,  
Contrived a short-cut through the wine-dark sea.

But see how present deities do more  
Than any past:  
Our heroes hurry home, our girls are thrilled,  
And lo, our nylon  
Nightly hangs, above the bathtub, drying fast.

## Initial Flight

By touching hands we cried contact to the wind  
And scorned familiar patterns. We could not  
(Not even if we wished) have stopped this wound  
Machine until the earth became a plot  
Of plane geometry beneath the sun.

Beneath the sun, yet far above the earth,  
We steered our lazy course, an airy run  
Between the shapeless clouds. Then back and forth  
Uncompassed, but certain of our home, we flew  
The uncharted lanes of our lost childhood's zone;

And the daily stream of time was forced to flow  
From the sun, through us, and down to earthbound men,  
Who looked up, saw nothing, looked down at earth again.

# The Dream of Carnonensis

## I

Motionless from some small boat upon a pond,  
Your arm trails from the side down to the water,  
Your finger-tips, barely touching the surface,  
Tingle at their reflection's edge.  
Suddenly the sun goes down. The water is cold,  
And you are afraid. Your hand recoils, and that  
Below, as if in sudden fear, is gone.

Horried that night you stand before the glass  
And realize it is the same. The lights  
Throw heartless knives that pierce the uncut skin  
And seek themselves as the hand mirrored in  
The water seeks itself eternally.

## II

Whereupon the ages cease. All consciousness  
Turns upside down and rushes to its source,  
Streaming torrentially with liquid haste past  
The tree whose bark begins to disappear,  
Whose shade grows smaller, whose stump begins to sink  
Beneath the mud. The mist begins to fill  
The air with floating smoke of earth. The light  
Begins to cloud, and haze as real as  
A memory forgotten spreads throughout  
The swiftly moving stream.

There is a hum  
Of disappearing life. Revolving worlds  
Spin swiftly to their source; then sound itself  
Begins to sink, as if into a bog,

Subsiding to the first known tone, hollow,  
And low, and broad, as substanceless as fog.  
    (half sound and half light,  
    half heard in half night,  
    primordial mist in muddy clay  
    eternal sound of lightless day.)

### III

The giant urge, the energy, resolves,  
Completely, as a timeless unity,  
Both hands are one, but one alone cannot  
Suffice, not one alone that comes from two.  
Thus captured triangles diverge, each from each,  
For oneness must be seen or it is lost.  
The half of one begins to speak, alone,  
As if communing with herself, but he  
Who is the other part and yet a part  
Of her, re-echoes all her spoken words:

“My universe, my world, my very life  
Begin and end because of loving you.  
My eyes are yours, yet only by their means  
Can I behold my love, for we are one.  
Within my consciousness I feel your pulse,  
The ceaseless beating of your mighty heart;  
But I can never know your face, for it  
Is mine as mine is yours and both are one.

“Since I can ask, my love, and I am you,  
Then you must know the same eternal pain,  
And you must realize that pain is all  
We know. My love, my lord, there must be more.

“In this half light and double soul how can

I love? And how can you imagine that  
Your love is not directed at yourself?  
Oh, let me go. Unchain these unseen ties,  
Disclose yourself to me that we may know.  
Let us be two, my lord, held not by bonds  
But by the test of strongly felt desire."

The oneness must be seen and tries to spread,  
But unresilient thought cannot be thinned;  
The sudden sound of cleavage fills the air  
With furious, explosive cries of grief.

Now unattached, one part begins to fall.  
He drops through unnamed air, through unmarked time,  
Conglobulating with the secret slime.  
At last he stops in sudden finity.  
Eternal slave to stern necessity.

#### IV

Since time rushed by and space-bound life became  
Primeval ooze, a year, you think, must have  
Elapsed. But everything is still the same:  
The lights still burn; the comb still rests within  
Your hand. Downstairs you hear the people call  
And remember it is time to go to them.

You'll go down the stairs and find them waiting there;  
Their eyes will smile, their hands will reach for yours,  
And you'll return their smiles, accept their hands.  
You'll close the door upon the silent dark.

Again they call. Their tones are warm and broad.  
Oh, love, forgiveness is a warm, broad hand.

## Prescription for One Suffering from Hallucinations

Perish the thought of Moses. He is dead.  
His taunt no longer hurts, nor has he tears  
To shed upon the brightness of our years.  
Mad thoughts grow vested in the sleepless head;  
Protect your title to the tranquil bed.  
("But I have such strange fears.")

The dust of crumbled tablets falls upon  
The dust of him who brought them from the hill.  
When you are wakened by the flashing chill  
And grope to put another blanket on,  
Don't blame the wraith of Moses. He is gone.  
("And I am very ill.")

And in the morning, cheerful at the sink,  
Observe: no ghosts will walk your promised land.  
You'll whistle as you wash your steady hand  
And turn away. Time's legendary brink  
Hides hundreds vanquished by a knowing wink.  
("I mourn each member of that lost, mad band.")

## An Argument at Cambridge

Discussing value judgments and one's God,  
Opinions of the best, most thoughtful men,  
Now voices took on frost, then slowly thawed,  
Grew heated, froze, or slowly thawed again

While outside moon rode high above a cloud,  
And in cold night the snow crust hollowed thin.  
The wind like one profound or justly proud  
Paid no attention to the abstract din

Inside where theories moved like noviced pawns  
Across the well-worn carpet of the board,  
And where rose thoughts of ceaseless polygons  
Drawn on the beach sand by a child's sword.

But finally the commoners were gone,  
The board was cleared of bishop, castle, knight;  
The royal couples, helpless now and drawn,  
Both willed a silent treaty to the fight.

The silence that ensued revived the cold  
And brought it inward from the frozen yard  
To grateful spurts of voices saying old  
Accepted nothings of a greeting card.

Then hasty host forgot his faith in tongue,  
Kicked at the radiator, made it sing  
The desperate petition of the young,  
A plea for comfort from the landlord king.



## Honor

Cold sputters in the midnight's sudden mind.  
Fear walks as convoy. In a town that boasts  
Few other dangers than the nervous kind  
The Danish Prince and I are moved by ghosts.

Awkward in the action of our very play,  
We sense the threat of every watching eye;  
Our panicked mouths forget what mouths should say,  
Our pleading faces search the hidden sky,

Where honor looms as timeless as an urn  
Kept flawless while the nations rose and fell,  
A masterpiece, secure from time's slow burn  
And bruited violation of the shell;

Where still the ex-king whale thrashes the sea,  
And Ahab wanders lonely as a claw  
And all in search of former dignity  
For honor's sake seek quarrel with a straw.

## The Urban Spring

Spring dispels the terror of large cities,  
The stubbornness of stone, concrete and signs  
That startle into sudden movement lines  
Of waiting cars; refines obscenities,

Accepts the taxi-driver's snarled advice  
As homage to itself, and fills the air  
With cries of sudden jubilation where  
The water runs beneath the thinning ice.

No politician, spring, to walk the wards,  
To plod the precincts, handing self around,  
It settles like a light upon the ground,  
Measuring its strength in brilliance, not in yards.

Spring wakes the city as no headline can.  
Within the vacant lot the quickened weeds  
Grow through discarded words that no one reads,  
That no one heeds, or needs, since spring began.

And hope is new. Here in the park I see  
The aging widows, comfortable and rich,  
Hoping to cure their matrimonial itch  
By offering love their proud maturity.

Here too I see the lightened matrons walk  
Erect behind the pram's insistent weight;  
They call to friends and joining them create  
Congestion in the roadway as they talk.

And I, who know my place, now give them room,  
Rejoicing in the need to step aside.  
Those coward convolutions of my brain  
Are heartened by the triumph of the womb,  
The paradox of mothers telling pain  
With shudders, fear, and most, that other pride.

## A Writer of Respectable Verse

Love of a special order, married, and well placed  
Excluded foundlings from his well-bred line  
And barred, of course, the sinister.

Planned parenthood and disciplined routine refused  
Clandestine naughtiness, perplexing links  
With feverish uncertainty;

But bedded down the chosen ones  
In well selected sheets and prudent puffs  
Tucked bravely up the overlap, turned off the heat.

Each offspring, born to be well versed,  
Well watched its step, its mincing measurement  
From curb to curb, the moment for a firm "No more!"

Now let it be his parent's boast,  
If he so wishes it: No child of his  
Was ever known upon the streets, a common name,  
A laughing comforter of quiet men.

## Expulsion and Reply

Well worth the walk through sun and heated tar  
Even across the brown and stubbled grass  
Because all noisy crickets then were drowned  
In the coolest water running over stones  
And birds occasionally plummeted  
Up from the shallows of their shadowed leaves.  
Water against the heated flesh was good  
And coldly clarifying. The summer was  
A high bright note long held in joy.

Cement now jars the once tarred, tireless feet.  
Barbed wire protects the stubble from our feet.  
The ancient stream is dammed and lost to sight  
And the belching insect sucks his last few leaves.  
Nothing but the shadow of the loud black hawk  
Can chill the surface of the hot flat pond.

May he who tampered with the surface of our road  
Himself be cased in stone;  
May he who drove us from the short-cut of our field  
Himself be driven far;  
May he who widened and made hot  
Our narrow icy dell  
Himself grow hot and stink and rot  
In everybody's hell.

## Big Business

Relinquishing the lion's chair and voice  
The Head of a Department Now Absorbed  
Remains perplexed.

For time that took him fast  
And smiling through the years allowed no choice,  
Forming within his eager grasp of hands  
This living thing.

Now Galatea grown to mortal size  
Has smiles no longer for Pygmalion's eyes.  
She sees in him a former generation,  
Needs no pretense to miss his consternation,  
And rustles off to meet her latest spark.  
Pygmalion gropes in rooms of sudden dark.

So he now frightened hears  
A mingling of well-wishing and farewell,  
And his victorious moment somehow gone.

Congratulating hands thus shake farewell  
In greeting fathers of dynastic bliss  
Who feel, amazed, death's very quiet kiss.

## To One Who Loved Fast Cars

I see her golden—as she was to me—  
Prodigal with distance and with time,  
And gaily giving speed its sanctity;

Bestriding, as it were, her very god,  
Whom she directed, as Europa might have done  
Had she been more bull-hearted, less naive.

For she was power, more than her machine,  
And throbbed with certainty upon all roads.  
I never questioned justice at her wheel.

But now that she has raced through all the roads,  
And dealt her final coup de grace to time  
I raise my voice in praise of quick contempt:

O let the demonstrators be quick to show  
Some locomotion worthy of her use,  
That she who scorned the daily lanes of earth  
Might serve to gild all interstellar space.







David R. Clark: *Broken Reflections*





## The Knight of Faith

"He is not a poet. . . . And yet the whole earthly form he exhibits is a new creation by virtue of the absurd. He resigned everything infinitely, and then he grasped everything again by virtue of the absurd."—Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*.

The Knight of Faith is that hilarious fellow  
Who takes his metaphor seriously  
Though the tenor be crucifixion  
And he himself the vehicle.  
No tragic poet,  
He is the master of the incongruous,  
The only one not laughing when at his command  
The mountain fails to move.  
Or if it should,  
Making the way straight for a startled laugh,  
The only one not startled,  
Tipping his thanks, balancing his burden through.

His prattfall martyrdoms under the clumsy cross  
Are taken with good grace  
For Art's sake. Helpless with love,  
His rage at the upright straight man  
(High-stepping hypocrite that tripped him low)  
Is side-splitting, the thrust being keenest  
When he himself is *raised above us all*—  
By ropes and hawsers!

His golden blood's a gay way to be crowned!  
And after the first bitter, confident taste,  
His courteous "No thanks!" to the vinegar of charity  
Is delicious innocence, half-conscious irony  
Countering the puns on *nails* in hands and feet.

The best of all is how he gets out of it:  
He plays alive as Falstaff once played dead,  
Resurrecting himself at the final curtain,  
And brings down thunder of joy, as we,  
Outside ourselves in his mastery of the absurd,  
Rise and hail Him.

## Old Chapel: a Poem in Favor of the World

All worlds but the World miss these leaves' moving  
In color between meditation and the sky.

The World rings bells, O yes, and the soul responds  
As the deep pool, shaken by the tower's image,  
Straightens to recollect itself in the sky  
And feels, under deepening movement, the earth unmoving.

The World is there to remind us into seeing  
(The sky in the pool no more than the pool in the sky):  
This tower, these trees—landscapes of greens and blue!  
The landscapes of the soul sleep in forgetting  
Until the bells of the World bring our remembering.

Yes, but how clear our memory of that remembering!  
And brighter reflections in words! Watch them, Stranger!  
See in my eyes the pools, the unmoving clouds  
Of the worlds I fashion from your recognition—

But then turn away to the World and its leaves' turning.



## Dolphin's Barn, Dublin

There's always floating in the Grand Canal  
Some bloated carcass of a dog  
That interrupts reflections of the sky,  
And farther than you'd think that stink of death  
Is center for winged things:  
From Inishtrahull to St. Johns the ships  
Heave garbage in the sea  
Nor satisfy the sky  
Where by the riding mast the gulls  
Rise on wind-trembling wing.

Once by the Naugatuck I pushed my wings  
Of prayer till they fell slack,  
Icarus to a gull that met the wind,  
Rose,  
Not more than trembling a wing,  
His eye stretched for carrion on the wave:  
A gull of sea and air, that, marrying both,  
Made of my inlands as of sea-lost islands  
Perpetual study of one fine pursuit.

## Angelus ad Virginem

*Angelus ad Virginem*  
*Subintrans in conclave*  
*Virginis formidinem*  
*Demulcens inquit, Ave!*

Make me thy makeles Maid,  
Sudden mild messenger!  
Wake me in terror  
To wondering welcome!

Under the archway  
Enter this emptiness!  
Fill by not moving  
The space of this breathing.

That the blossom well  
R'ound the hole of a wound,  
That the dogwood tree  
May quarter the sky,

Virgin this wood  
Sleeps for the carver.  
Make of my myriad grain  
Print of thy lover!

## To the Clattering Colleens of Crumlin Cross

They cross themselves in front of every church,  
“Did you *know* that? Do you *know*?”  
The cycled colleens clattering as they go.  
No foe can enter in  
Past the becrisscrossed chin!  
Not but if bit in little pieces, no!  
Though silken foot backslide, to the Word they go.  
For there’s a Paraclete  
Under the bicycle seat  
That to the very Jaws supports them, so  
Let greasy Fortune spin  
Dark tread to privy skin  
Christ shall cross out their sin!  
“Did you *know* that? Do you *know*?”

## Robin

Here on the road bed  
Sweet Robin lies  
Nursing at her red breast  
These gold-green flies,  
Nor cares, for the nursing's sake,  
Whose wings arise  
To touch her breast awake  
And not her eyes.

## Promise

Beyond the locked gate  
The land stretches;  
By weighty beeches  
The herds wait.  
Cloud-gold touches  
Far-timbered reaches;  
The promised riches  
Accumulate.

Beyond the locked gate  
A way beseeches;  
The bee encroaches  
His golden state;  
A house watches,  
Tall grain bleaches  
For the hand that clutches  
The locked gate.

## Asylum\*

"I said, 'You're right! At last they've found  
The perfect place for Ezra Pound.  
I wish they'd put him there long since!'  
And yet I don't hate what he prints.  
But now each form of mental ill  
Must seek its house behind the hill;  
And why should pœtics alone  
Bul-bul for the sane man's stone?"

Let all who can't be normal come!  
With Ezra raise our hated home.  
Queerness be our quarantine  
From the pledged plague of seeming sane.  
There, knowing no rule but the ear,  
We in our sound-proof cells will hear—  
Whatever drums our ear-drums beat—  
Poetry, insanely sweet."

\* Written at the time of Pound's commitment to a mental hospital.

## The Epistemologist in Transport

Reflected in the view that I reflect on  
There is another view that reflects on me,  
And in that view I and my view are reflected  
So that it's not so simple, you see, to see.

Brightly coached by broad-viewed windows, even  
Opens her virgin forest, tree after tree;  
But do I plunge my glance in her green pleasures  
Or the gloss from another's glass on the tree that I see?

This is what comes of being too much illumined;  
I see a tree, nor know if the tree I see  
Be the Eden virgin of original knowledge,  
Or the glint in a glass of the gloss on a glimpse of the tree.



## The Clear Man

Right as rule  
And bright as a bell  
He is silvered pool  
To the sensible

And truth to tell  
Waits ready and cool  
And rings out all  
Its changes well.

## Bach

Balance the miniscal soul where full sight spills  
All timbres on a filmy music,  
Where wind as bow to the bough  
Pianoed waters answer,  
And bird-songs bud in all the feathering trees!

Over and over the sun this water  
Practised the runs of love.  
Now swings out of twisting staves  
The golden nest of God.

## Pond-Image

Like the coating of the eye,  
This is the surface of the sky.  
The high bird floats with the mite.  
The spot of the eye drifts with the bird and the mite  
And motes of the mind.  
Here one knows unblinded  
The sun come out of a cloud,  
About whose glare the young growth  
Shape uncertainly.  
Terror has held them till now.  
Their dead chatter in the sun.

## The Bee Space

I sped away  
From my swarm in the city  
Droned down a valley  
Drowsed with a tree

Prised that embrace  
To the bee's space  
Honeyed interstice  
O sweet comb crevice

Poised on that comb  
Being from whom came  
Honey tree and valley  
From whom swarmed the city

And from that fraught tree  
That disclosed valley  
Fright to the city  
Lined me live away.

## At Merrion Square

*"I . . . cried to the Lord, who said unto me, 'Thou seest how young people go together into vanity, and old people into the earth. . . .'"—George Fox.*

A meditation on the head-casts and skulls of the various races of Man (at the National Museum, Dublin), on El Greco's "St. Francis in Ecstasy" (at the National Gallery), and on a girl seen in the street.

New dead are decent, familiarity breeds;  
Masks of the dead this gentle witness bear  
That for uproarious skulls beneath them pleads  
Extenuation of the worm's repair.

Darfur has faced his Mecca on this wall,  
The young man templed high and sombrely;  
Dark cast, a shade like his my shoulders fall;  
His lips are more than mine in gravity.

Shem, Ham and Japheth in a Quaker meeting  
Gather before us, nor lift up their eyes,  
Already sunk to the quiet, to bear us greeting—  
Interiority their sole emprise.

At length Pariah communes in ecstasy;  
The broad Lapp lady has comfort, though she sinned;  
Old Tartar's jaws have swallowed death in victory,  
Prevented passion, or subvented wind.

The jolly Rogers round this favoured state  
Swarm with a discountenancing leer;  
Toothless they howl, or grit their teeth in hate,  
But lack the face their martyrs salvage here.

. . . .

Where Francis, bent and opened like a hand,  
Gapes for the burning shaft of Christ's cross bow,  
Stigmata'd clouds stretch out to reprimand  
Mortality and an old skull below.

A fleshly light upon his old bald head,  
Accepting all with an ungleaming look,  
Squats on the solid rock old Adam, dead,  
Friendlier than Francis, but not less a spook.

. . . .

From out a rain hood of Madonna blue  
Unjust eyes fall upon me, as from a cloud  
The burning shaft, and I fall back, pierced through,  
But lose both face and favour in the crowd.

Although perfection of her grace may shun  
Asceticism of war, disease and dearth,  
In visionary flash our race has run,  
Young into vanity, old into the earth.

## Mountain Ash: Poem for an Ember Day

*"And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter."*

All visible things that interrupt the light  
Burn to a hazeless blue that winter mourns,  
Hiding its dark in dark.  
Hemlocks that hid in green now hide in snow.  
The earth is white with sky, but sky is heavy with the world.  
No ashy flake glitters in the sun  
As iris blue burned in another blue.

Fall borne fruit of the ash,  
Burn fiercest at the close!  
Offer the year your embers quenched with snow.

That wind made a great rush  
When the crow spoke.  
The cherry birds, all tails and wings in flight,  
Sparked yellow and red.  
The embers blazed in the ash, blazed up to follow  
All visible things that interrupt the light.

Raiders under the thorn seek humbled coverts.  
But before the last flametail gutters abashed,  
The first flares up with a will in head-down flight,  
On the little cross at the fir-crest lists where the wind blows,  
Scouts the whitened field to where the lost ash  
Flares up a late bright fruit for wintry flight.  
The winged return  
Flings care upon the wind.  
Goes slippery down like noiseless trusting children.  
Come to the fruit,  
Must break its flight,  
Must brake itself in the element where it flew.

Tail to earth, wings to world, crown to sky,  
The waxwing stands a Maltese cross on the wind.  
Lights in burnt brown vesture.  
Turns bandit eyes.  
Crest below claw, bows in snowy conversion  
Snatching wine-glowing flesh.  
Then turns with fiery beak and red-slashed side  
And mounts with wings.

The host flames in a winged return to the ash.  
A rending hour crackles in the dry tree.  
After, shrunk limbs retain  
Glimmers of red, all that was not consumed.  
Smoke-thick the dark snows down.  
Dark snows down all the earth.

In the blanched morning  
There is no complaint.  
The ever-green  
Whose burden is snow  
Abide  
Nod only.



## Paradise Pond, Smith College

Out of falls from Paradise a spectrum blows.  
Out of this demolition and hosanna  
The seven-fold gift of light.

On a lapsed day follow listless the sloughed leaf,  
Slow,  
From the dry tree,  
Take fall for flight, try every slothful air,  
Choose as if by choice the downstream wind  
To dimly wing,  
Then skate like Satan ice-brimmed Paradise!

This brittle progress is without reflection  
Until its grandeur without pause  
Cease  
In the dark astonished water.  
There in slow awareness before the falls  
The dead leaves wait  
In the hushed press formed up for dissolution,  
In the deep union of waters bent on themselves.

Underneath spiration and the bow,  
From the flashing falls the flooded race begins  
Coursing the rapid bed; the tribal currents  
Turn one on another, merge and part,  
Turn and displace each other,  
The sun scatters his crowns in swift election,  
And the bound race runs from its confluent hour.

On clear reflection, shadows muddily lie;  
Unfallen clouds float through mirroring tangles

Of the dry trees reaching way down for a cloud.  
Now unmoved by the wind,  
In the stillness that is above triumphant power,  
The dead leaf floats on transfigured cloud.  
The trees stand shouting round the transcended lake.  
In turn and time brought to the blazing edge,  
The cloud with diligence takes the leap of the leaf  
And points in foam from the falls.

Follow the foaming of this falling passion!  
Fall, in an epileptic emptying,  
As leaves, closed blinded eyes, in the white midst!  
This is your shattering seizure  
Of water, light, and the bow.  
Out of this demolition of hosanna  
Daze the arcing stripes of sight.

## Quaker Meeting

In the precarious and withered ivy  
That moves in the same air that moves  
The mountains toward their autumn  
And the city smothers  
To incubate its futures in a sun-warmed haze  
In the precarious and withered ivy  
The Sunday words pass with the breath of sparrows.

Here the airy sparrow high singing  
Celebrates the nest gone, the perpetual spiritual family,  
Voices the morning for the silent meeting.

In all those epic pretensions of human community  
By wrath ruined or lost in mind's many turnings,  
Deity moves most in the words "I sing!"—  
Tautology to the falling song of the sparrow.

## Rosenallis Graveyard

Near this spot is buried  
WILLIAM EDMUNDSON  
the first member of  
THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS  
who settled in Ireland  
Died 31st of 6th month (OLD STYLE)  
aged nearly 85 years

The cedar of Lebanon is incorruptible wood,  
Over the cypress the crow cannot darken the day,  
And we have come in the light where Edmundson stood  
When his fire through the Slieve Bloom hills went sweeping away.

Though the Quaker rows now sink in a cooling prayer,  
Or consumed and risen in yew join perpetual vow,  
Yet the plaque on the wall says William Edmundson's near,  
Sublimed away where we can't find him now.

Beneath his restrained notice a young Friend stands,  
Her light abounding more than she knows or could say,  
And in green flames of the cypress the wind expands  
The fire that burnt William Edmundson away.







Robert G. Tucker: *A Way of Looking*





## The One Word

The vocabulary of love  
Begins with fugues of light  
And texture.  
Then, increase:  
Fragrance of leaves,  
Violet, lilac, wild grape,  
The taste of springs, a raindrop,  
Snow, an apple.

Held in the heart  
These treasures live  
While touch learns granite, velvet;  
The ear: claxons, cannon;  
Taste seeks gases, beeves, whole lambs;  
Sight finds beggars; and nostrils  
Learn vast poverties, wounds.

And what diction, idiom to use  
To tell how love can heal,  
Can sing encyclopedias of enormity  
To sense? As if love were the one word,  
The perfect root,  
Whose fugues were all, were all.

## Imagine Beast-Wings

Not me, I tried to say. Not me, but you.  
And said it ill; a vain man speaks within it,  
Waiting applause, proud as though he'd win it.  
But something in me means to say it true.  
There's a love, I want to say, that's new,  
Fresh forever, surging through each minute,  
Through foot and yard abstractions we make in it:  
That's the love a vain man tells askew.

An owl can hold a tree and outglare snow,  
Then gather itself in flight and sweep northeast  
Over the elms, the brook, across the fields.  
Fresh forever, that love.

Words I know  
Are vain unless they mean, Imagine Beast-  
Wings, the power to choose what that love yields.

## Sea Poem

Shadows on green,  
Ghosts of old sails,  
Move down the river.  
See, now the rover  
Veers to the calls,  
Follows the sea-green.

Cries from the shrouds  
Touch last the land's end;  
Wake-swooping gulls  
Mingle keen wails  
With voices of seamen  
Bending-on sheets.

Sails on the sea-swell,  
Ghosts on the grey wave,  
Drift past the eye's pledge,  
Dip at the sky's edge;  
Gone, while the gulls grieve.  
Gone. Hear the sea-knell.

## Pilgrimage

Chimes swing, sounding:  
Tongues pounding shells,  
Locked in a case of stone.

Dark, this night.

Against rock-strong turrets the wind washes.  
Snowflakes bend, kiss rocks,  
Recoil, rush into whorls, drifting,  
Or melt, pilgrims at the shrine.

Idols wear smooth, crumble,  
Decay with the kisses of pilgrims.

Tongueless chimes swing,  
Shells, tolling an untold time,  
Locked in the wash of the wind.

## Semper Fidelis

Cannon quakes shudder my spit of sand,  
And overhead the heavy shuttle goes  
Spinning arcs to the soft, the distant explosions,  
Binding me accomplice to an aim  
True as Cain's and surer than erosion's.

## The Rash Fragment

Too close to the tidemark—  
Kelp and drift, a rope over the rocks—  
He comes, and sees the juniper,  
Exposed and clinging  
With every root to earth;  
Watches the breakers shatter  
On the furious brown-green spine;

And feels at flood the shock,  
The zeal to undermine,  
To sweep the earth from feet,  
Uproot, beat on ledges,  
Swallow with groaning throat  
This rash fragment of the land's getting;

But waits the broken breakers' ebb,  
And sees the juniper, springing, scatter spray,  
Nod slowly, rest, keeping its clutch.



## Visiting Hour

No, he couldn't take a cracker, thanks.  
He'd had some milk and that was setting hard,  
But maybe raise the bed, they turn those cranks:  
That might work awhile. He'd tried a card  
This morning, would we mail it on the way,  
And take the rest, he'd scrawl no more. The pain  
Was something awful, level now, but stay  
A little while. There. There it went again.  
Yes, was so glad we'd come, once more to see.  
The flowers kept their colors. Everyone kind.  
The heat goes down at night, though. Yes, and slept  
Sometimes, until his side, coals it could be,  
Raked him awake. Oh, knew they couldn't find  
The remedy to die would be, and wept.

## Turning Tide

Ocean once made mind  
The dory that I rowed  
In whose stern my son  
Could see ahead as I behind.  
Our tributary flowed  
Into the deeper river he saw run

Under a bridge and outward to the sea.  
The cooler air! I turned and saw us drawn  
By turning tide,  
And thought to drift, though—out—I shouldn't be  
Strong enough to save our being gone  
As long as ocean's impulse should decide.

A great rock on the bank moved to the rear,  
A lobster buoy bobbed past,  
The boat drove at the bridge where, spilling froth,  
A wave writhed up each pier;  
The flow between, green-black, cold, and fast,  
Insistent drew the dory as light a moth—

And when I said, No more,  
It was all that I could do to pull to shore.

## Prayer

Nourish, where slowly it wakes, a strong seed.  
Advance the urgent massing in the core,  
The dark vigor groping, unhusking.  
At the burst be. Be to the first sure,  
To the second shoot, the third, sure. Choose,  
Love, root's will to sink root,  
Sprout's to lift sprout. No filament fail.  
Though heaven spill, let bud compose  
Stalk and twig, trunk, branches, the panoply.  
Foster bloom-savor, the full fruit,  
Mist-smoke, fleck, rose-cheek. Bear  
In my touch gleam, to my eyes form.  
When teeth tear the taut skin,  
Salvage a strong seed. Arise, descend to my taste.

## A Way of Looking

### i

I watch within this room and from this chair  
Freight cars rolling left within the frame  
Of window and a building to their right  
Till left goes the caboose, and then no more.  
No more—but now I see the world go right:  
The hill, the highway, river, tree, and all  
Go right. They move as slowly as the freight,  
In opposite direction—as though I  
By watching that train's motion now must move  
At its rate toward its station in my chair.  
Oh, I can stop illusion when I will,  
Confine my looking to the room, the book.  
But then if nothing's moving that I see  
In room or book, I've found a thing to do,  
For move it surely can, my point of view.

### ii

Whole galaxies appear to drift away.  
Even small illusions—Dippers, Bears—  
At harbor here, will show us parting flares  
Unless a way of looking makes them stay.

## Veritas Vanitatum

Lamont's facade is plateglass and, within,  
A second rank of glass plates make a wall  
Before the check-out desk. Across the room  
The bookstacks stretch away into the dark.

One day in spring, waiting in Harvard Yard,  
Reflecting at the entrance to Lamont,  
I saw myself exposed, and doubly, there.

The fainter apparition was a frame  
In which stood that one closer to the dark  
Who seemed, for clarity, upon the whole  
To gain, though losing bulk.

Sheer want of glass  
Left me to guess how I should look beyond.  
In view of one diminishing return:  
Most small, I guess, most clear when in the dark.

## Hamlet to Shakespeare

And should I play this part as if with love,  
What consequence? The villain vanishes  
For me; the lust that's lost can no more move  
To gain his gains. Your notion banishes  
The public motive—righteousness—off-stage,  
Out-theater, off-world, so out past star.  
For say that I were unenraged by rage  
For place and power. Think how people are:  
They'd turn on me as one who, tending fire,  
Had slept the fueling, lost the flame. Not judge  
A person whom the spirit shrieks a liar?  
You'd knock my reputation down to smudge,  
Lose it in soot. I for a villain feel?  
No. I'll obey the ghost. Your love's too real.

## Two for the Show

### i

*Scene: Milan; Time: Out of Joint*

Laertes, boy; Iago; Edmund; sorry.  
There's nothing now your Prospero can do.  
Ariel? Look, you'll learn the whole hard story.  
Stuck in a tree. I'm reading. Go be you.

### ii

*The Fool to Lear*

Outside yourself, look: all diversity;  
Within, whatever unity may be.  
Imagine, if the same were true of me!  
Come, try my cap. There's Gloucester. He will see.

## Song In and Out of a Country Churchyard

The black cat licked her whiskers and she sang:  
I make my world, the dainty mouse made his,  
The grey bitch, that great critic with her fang,  
Makes hers, makes hers, and God makes all of this,  
Creating in his own mysterious way.  
I can tell the grey bitch from the mouse;  
Both, from my Persian cousin; and I say  
The sense of making order is here to stay.

And when that day, that day for which the grouse  
Prepares, toward which I lope, that day arrives,  
It seems to me that having had nine lives  
As me, I'll really be as much myself  
As I shall ever be; and God, Himself.



## Thanksgiving

The naked tree has borne its gradual losses  
And now, awaiting snow, provides a sparrow  
That windswept perch whereon, alone, he tosses  
At look-out for a seed in rime-stiff mosses.  
Submissive grass bows by the rusting harrow.

Not long ago, by straw which, full, it matted  
And then a little loosed by slow receding,  
The brook itself bore leaves; a red one, maple,  
Spinning below these three bridge beams cross-slatted,  
Whirled free past channel storm-brush—gay, proceeding.

We had gone out in fall's brisk breeze and sunshine  
To see, above that knoll the groundhog sleeps in,  
Each tree alight, the perfect pastels running  
To earth and up to primal red—such cunning  
As might in a leaf elude brook-thicket's keeping.

Let God be thanked for seed and all yet green,  
For grace to touch the zenith of a season;  
Thank God, though each—though flocks—should fly the scene;  
Who will, when brook congeals in wind more keen,  
Will on as gracefully as love reshapes our reason.

## Nothing to Fear

Hay to the touch brittle-sharp  
They try to tamp smooth where they'll lay him,  
Folding a cloak there upon it.  
Hay at the edges still flares, though,  
Everywhere pointing and criss-crossed.  
The frame which holds it is weathered,  
Dry, all the splinters are greying,  
And one board has split where a knot's gone.  
But see how the top board's worn smooth:  
The edge now shines as if polished,  
And grain-varied colors, within, shine.

The burnt-sweet smoke of the oil flame  
Drifts off, more light strikes the manger.  
Grey reflects blue and the hay glows,  
Settles a bit, and the spikes sway  
Now, as they lay in the newborn.

Come, I'll lay hands on the edge here  
And look at the child wrapped in swaddling,  
Just waking, whose eyes seem to wonder  
Where the blown shadows have come from.  
Or is it the light that he watches?  
Both tremble, but see how he's calm,  
As though there were nothing to fear.

So you begin here by trusting.  
O innocent, could you learn better,  
I wonder what better you'd learn.

## The Child to See

The star caught in a tree;  
The dove stretched on a rafter;  
The child to see thereafter  
The dove, the star come free.

## Two Christmases

The first a shepherd wonder, immaculate.

Then by a way all stains

Hard knowledge: Caiaphas may kill

Pilate may abet

Judas may betray

Peter may fear

That God's will may be done

Through death.

Through death, then,

The second Christmas, stone at the heart put by,

New born, wise to love, and to fear not

To be all fool, a child.

## Tonight

A month ago, snowflakes dissolved  
The instant that they touched—became  
The brook.

Now, in a darker noon,  
Wind-flung snow-grains  
Burst on a rigid surface.

Tonight, a sudden fish  
Will thread the narrow flow  
Beneath thick ice heaped with a cloud of drifts,

And this evergreen, capped and bearded,  
Will say how long  
Water must keep distinct its winter states.

## As Though the Child Weren't Yours

(Abraham and Isaac, Genesis, Chapter 22)

How, at the time, faith seems no more than guess.  
Leading his first-born, only son, as bid,  
He could not know exactly what You'd do  
And, as he neared the place, knew even less.  
(As though the child weren't Yours!) He must have said,  
"God will provide himself a lamb," lest You  
Misunderstand his plight, having to wind  
Trust in deceit. Nor yet until the knife  
Fall at the child there, bound, whose frantic eyes  
Can see no way, would You at last unbind  
The knot. But, Father, as You will with life.  
So free in time each child to live more wise.

## Alleluia!

The nearer sun's now Ram-ish and he butts  
Ice-clouds into snows more lush than rain.  
Frigid earth dissolves in urgent ruts  
By grass that withered, fertile now again.  
Alleluia! Scatter we to fields  
Of bright temptations, as the birds return.  
Let him find her now who never yields  
To wintry commandments, and won't learn.  
Merciful's the only law of spring,  
And April gowned in green now tries, as judge,  
The cause of everyone and every thing  
Again: wherein the stone that couldn't budge  
May roll away—she finds—and every thief  
Arise in brightness trembling like a leaf.

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In Light That Moves  
(for Jean)

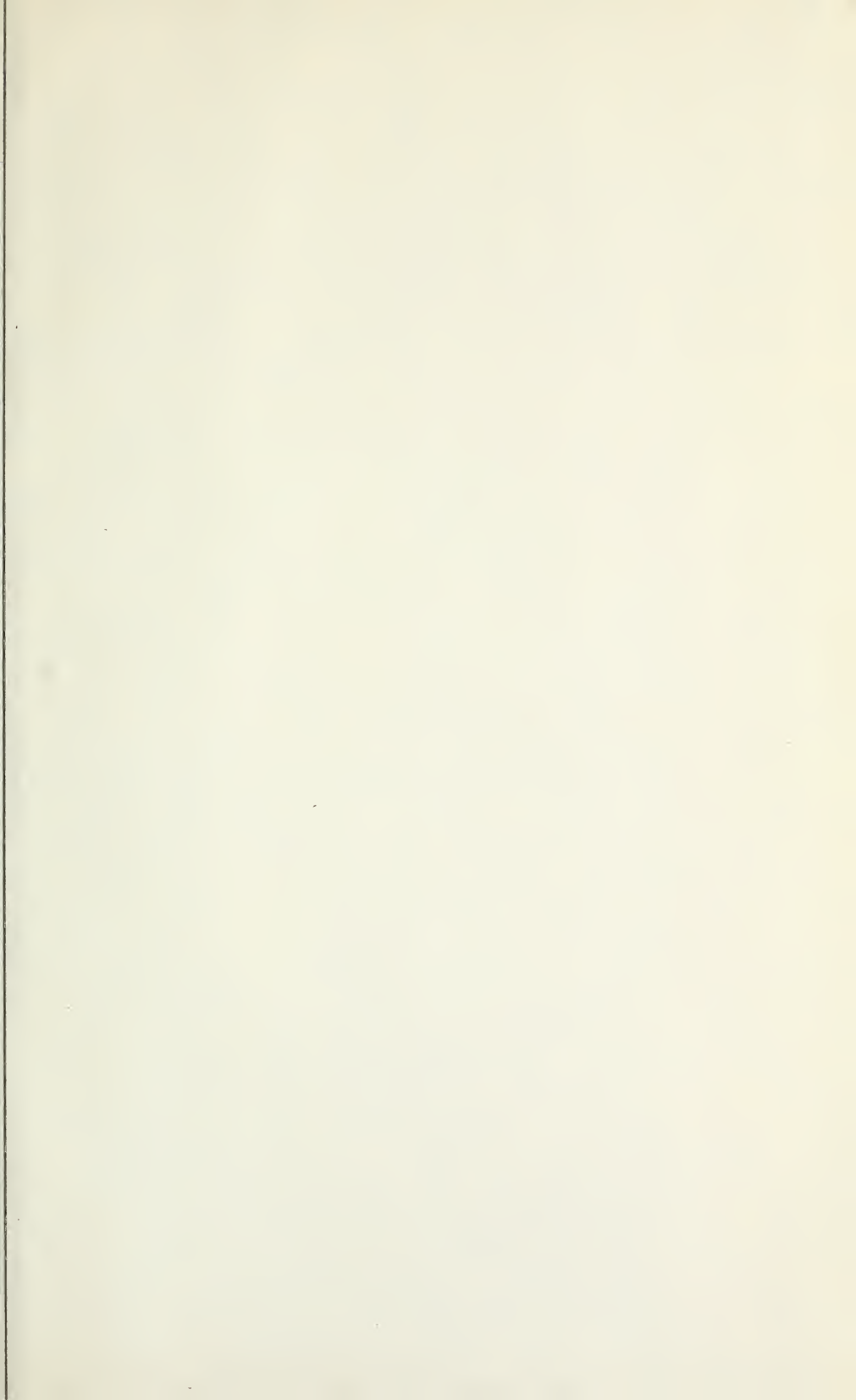
Beloved, live, but live, and I am home.  
So must we be in love  
Not as two trees that reach for sun above  
Then crumble, turn to loam,  
But each in light that moves  
Through earth and sun and ages. Lovely doom.

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